

Message Text

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ORIGIN ARA-10

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TAGS: SHUM, PFOR, AR, US

SUBJECT: KNOWLEDGEABLE ARGENTINE VISITORS URGE U.S.
CAUTION IN TREATMENT OF ARGENTINA

1. IN PAST FEW DAYS ARA/ECA HAS DISCUSSED ARGENTINE
AFFAIRS WITH THREE VERY KNOWLEDGEABLE ARGENTINE CIVILIAN
VISITORS. WHILE THEY COME FROM DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS,
THEY CONCUR IN SAYING THAT HUMAN RIGHTS CLIMATE REPEAT

CLIMATE HAS WORSENED IN ARGENTINA DESPITE LOWER LEVEL OF
TERRORISM. EVEN SO, THEY BELIEVE IT WOULD BE AN ERROR FOR
UNITED STATES TO SANCTION ARGENTINA FURTHER, BECAUSE
THIS WOULD LEAD TO WORSE SITUATION.

2. ONE VISITOR FELT THAT ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT WAS MAKING
SERIOUS EFFORT TO RESTRAIN UNDISCIPLINED ELEMENTS OF
SECURITY FORCES UP UNTIL LATTER PART OF 1976. HE STATED
THAT PRESIDENT CARTER'S ELECTION REVERSED THIS TREND
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BECAUSE THE ARGENTINE MILITARY ANTICIPATED HOSTILITY FROM
THE NEW ADMINISTRATION. SECRETARY VANCE'S ANNOUNCEMENT
IN FEBRUARY 1977 THAT FMS CREDITS WOULD BE CUT WAS TAKEN
BY THE ARGENTINE MILITARY AS AN ACT OF AGGRESSION AGAINST
THEM, AND FURTHER REASON FOR IGNORING U.S. PLEASFOR
CHANGE. VISITOR, WHO HAS ACCESS TO HIGHEST LEVELS OF ARGENTINE
ARMED FORCES, SAID THAT MILITARY TEND TO BLAME

PRESIDENT CARTER, DEMOCRATS ON HILL AND STATE DEPARTMENT (IN THAT ORDER) FOR MEASURES AGAINST ARGENTINA. HE MADE A PLEA FOR GREATER, MORE FREQUENT COMMUNICATION BETWEEN U.S. AND ARGENTINA (PARTICULARLY VISITS TO ARGENTINA BY KNOWLEDGEABLE, INFLUENTIAL AMERICANS) AND A FRANK AIRING OF SPECIFIC ISSUES THAT TROUBLED US, INCLUDING HUMAN RIGHTS BUT BROKEN DOWN INTO COMPONENTS. SANCTIONS ARE NOT THE RIGHT APPROACH, HE SAID, BECAUSE THEY ONLY SERVE TO HARDEN MILITARY. COMMENTING ON OVERALL HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION, HE THOUGHT THAT THE SITUATION WAS QUANTITATIVELY BETTER INASMUCH AS THE TERRORISTS ARE NEAR ELIMINATION, BUT INTELLECTUALLY PEOPLE NOW ARE RESIGNED TO THE EXCESSES. HE WAS QUITE DISTURBED, HOWEVER, ABOUT RECENT ECONOMIC ARRESTS AND THE READINESS OF THE MILITARY TO EQUATE ECONOMIC DELINQUENCY WITH SUBVERSION. HE MENTIONED ROBERT COX (BUENOS AIRES HERALD) ARREST AND HOW, OVERNIGHT, SOME PEOPLE WERE READY TO CONSIDER COX A SUBVERSIVE. OUR VISITOR WAS GENUINELY WORRIED ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY OF A WITCH HUNT AND THE LIKELIHOOD THAT ARGENTINES WOULD LOOK THE OTHER WAY IF THEY THEMSELVES WERE NOT INVOLVED. WITH REGARD TO THE GRAIVER, LANUSSE AFFAIR, HE THOUGHT THAT APART FROM WHAT SUBSTANCE THEY MAY HAVE, THEY ARE BEING PURSUED AS A KIND OF SMOKE SCREEN TO HIDE THE GOVERNMENT'S INABILITY TO PROCEED, AFTER ONE YEAR, WITH THE BASIC TASKS AHEAD OF GOVERNING THE COUNTRY.

3. ANOTHER VISITOR, WHO ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE MAY HAVE SEEMED OVERLY OPTIMISTIC IN THE PAST, REPORTED THAT THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION HAS DETERIORATED CLEARLY. HE WAS NOTABLY DISTURBED BY THE INCREASING PRACTICE OF THE SECURITY FORCES WHEREBY RELATIVES ARE PICKED UP, SORT OF AS HOSTAGES, IF THE ACTUAL PERSON BEING SOUGHT CANNOT BE FOUND. COMMENTING ON THE MAY 7 DECLARATION BY ARGENTINE BISHOPS, IN WHICH THE SECURITY PRACTICES OF THE GOA WERE CONDEMNED, OUR VISITOR SAID THE CHURCH HAD TO SPEAK OUT BECAUSE NO OTHER ORGANIZATION, POLITICAL OR JOURNALISTIC, COULD DO SO WITHOUT SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES. BUT IT IS ONE THING FOR THE CHURCH TO SPEAK OUT AND ANOTHER FOR THE UNITED STATES TO TAKE PUBLIC ACTION. THE CHURCH IS AN INTERNAL, ARGENTINE VOICE; US ACTIONS ARE EXTERNAL INTERFERENCE. THE CHURCH'S ACTION CANNOT BE USED TO STIMULATE MILITARY NATIONALISM; AMERICAN ACTIONS CAN, HE EXPLAINED.

4. THE THIRD VISITOR TENDS TO BE AN APOLOGETIC FOR MILITARY RULE. HE IS VERY CLOSE TO SEVERAL KEY GENERALS. THE VISITOR WAS AT A TOTAL LOSS TO EXPLAIN, HOWEVER, WHAT THE

MILITARY ARE TRYING TO DO BY EQUATING THE GRAIVER-TIMERMAN-LANUSSE AFFAIR WITH SUBVERSION. HE TOO SEEMED TO FEAR THAT ARGENTINA WAS ON THE VERGE OF SOME NEW, FEARFUL WITCH HUNT. AND HE TOO ASKED THE UNITED STATES TO REFRAIN FROM MAKING MATTERS WORSE FOR ARGENTINES. VANCE

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